

Decision Record

Black Canyon National Recreation Trail Copper Mountain Loop Construction Plan

Decision

It is my decision to approve the *Black Canyon National Recreational Trail – Copper Mountain Loop Construction Plan* as described in the Proposed Action of the Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-AZ-PDO-2012-015-EA.

Rationale for Decision

Construction of the Copper Mountain Loop Trail (BCNRT) represents the best attempt to increase outdoor recreation needs of an expanding urban population and promote the preservation of public access, to travel within, and enjoy and appreciate the historic resources along the BCNRT. It also provides the opportunity to teach American youth a valuable skill while encouraging them to preserve and protect our natural heritage for present and future generations.

The building of an additional 7.6 miles of trail will help manage the BCNRT, avoid the proliferation of “social trails” that could result in increased disturbance to the habitat, and increase the enjoyment of this world-class hiking, biking and equestrian trail.

The construction of the Copper Mountain Loop Trail takes a step toward implementing a management decision made in the Bradshaw Harquahala Resource Management Plan (BHRMP) to provide loop trails on the BCNRT.

Public Involvement

Members of the Public were encouraged to participate in the planning for the Copper Mountain Loop trail, as part of a larger planning effort in the area. Through the scoping process, a suggestion presented by a member of the Public was incorporated into the plan.

Alternatives Considered

The BLM considered two alternatives: the no action and the proposed action. Because the proposed action incorporates design features presented by the public, along with resource damage mitigation measures, two alternatives is sufficient.

Appeal Opportunity

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4. Your notice of appeal must be filed in this office, located at 21605 North 7th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona, 85027, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition (request) pursuant to regulation 43 CFR Part 4.21(b) for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during that time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice to appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and the petition for a stay must also be submitted to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted,
4. Whether the public interest favors a granting the stay.

Rem Hawes
Manager, Hassayampa Field Office

Date

Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-AZ-P010-2012-015-EA
Black Canyon National Recreation Trail, Copper Mountain Loop
Construction Plan Environmental Assessment

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment (EA), and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, described below, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is, therefore, not required.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 1.84 acres of BLM-administered land. The project includes construction of 7.6 miles of hiking trail over the course of approximately one month and will create a loop trail off of the established Black Canyon National Recreation Trail. Once completed, the trail is anticipated to have long-term use by the recreating public. The proposed project is located within the Black Canyon Trail Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and the Black Canyon Recreation Management Zone (RMZ), both designed for promoting trail-based recreation opportunities in the area, determined in the *Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plan* (BHRMP), 2010.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse

The construction of an additional 7.6 miles of trail in the BCNRT corridor will potentially relieve the increasing recreation pressures along the urban interface.

There is a risk of adverse impacts to cultural resources during construction of the trail, however the proposed action includes methods of preventing detrimental impacts if cultural resources are encountered.

2. Degree of effect on public health and safety

There would be a low potential effect on public health and safety during trail construction.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas

There are no historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the Copper Mountain Loop area.

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

With the construction of the Copper Mountain Loop, there is a low degree of controversy from the possible effects on the quality of the human environment. The BCNRT offers world-class hiking, mountain biking and equestrian opportunities and provides for the demands on BLM managed lands for outdoor recreation needs for the expanding Phoenix population.

5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

With the construction of the Copper Mountain Loop, there is a low degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

There is a low degree to which the construction of the Copper Mountain Loop may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Cumulative actions that could incrementally impact cultural resources in this project area include, trampling/crushing from livestock grazing; off-road vehicle driving and hiking by nearby homeowners and other recreating members of the public; and gas pipeline maintenance activities. The totality of these actions would not have adverse cumulatively significant impacts.

8. Degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Due to the requirements set forth in the project proposal, there is a very low probability that the construction of this trail would cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources.

9. Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.

There are no endangered or threatened species or critical habitat in the Copper Mountain Loop trail project area.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

The construction of the Copper Mountain Loop trail would not constitute a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Rem Hawes, Hassayampa Field Manager

Date

Copper Mountain Loop Black Canyon National Recreation Trail Construction Plan Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-AZ-P010-2012-015-EA

BLM Hassayampa Field Office

21605 North 7th Avenue

Phoenix, AZ 85027

March 2012

Prepared by: /s/

Kathleen Depukat
Project Lead

Reviewed by: /s/

Leah Baker
Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Approved by: /s/

Rem Hawes
Hassayampa Field Manager

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I. Introduction

Copper Mountain is located at the northwestern end of the Black Canyon National Recreation Trail (BCNRT) in T. 12 N., R. 3 E. Sections 19, 20, 21, 28, 30, 31, 32, and 33 in Yavapai County, Arizona. The BCNRT is managed as the Black Canyon Trail Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) within the Black Canyon Recreation Management Zone (RMZ). (See Appendix B - Map A). The BCNRT is approximately 80 miles long, stretching from the Carefree Highway (AZ Highway 74) northward along the base of the Bradshaw Mountains, beyond Highway 69 near the town of Mayer to the Prescott National Forest (See Map A). It began as a prehistoric Native American pathway linking local settlements together and providing a way to travel long distances. The trail follows a route that has been used since the 1600s for the movement of livestock and people.

During the development of the Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plan (completed in April 2010), specific management actions related to the BCNRT and surrounding land were considered. These management actions include locating, analyzing, building and designating additional loops, linking communities and other agencies' lands. (BHRMP, RR-56, Pg. 62)

President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in April 2010 and charged the Secretary of the Interior to develop a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda that addresses the challenges of reconnecting today's Americans, especially youth, with the great outdoors. The Hassayampa Field Office received stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to complete the construction of the Black Canyon National Recreation Trail, which offers world-class hiking, mountain biking and equestrian opportunities and provide for the demands on BLM-managed lands to meet outdoor recreation needs of the expanding Phoenix population. Work on the main trail was completed in a large part by youth corps. The Copper Mountain Loop has been identified as an opportunity to continue the experience and training of America's youth as part of America's Great Outdoors campaign. Four weeks of youth corps assistance has been provided for this spring to assist the Hassayampa Field Office to construct the Cooper Mountain Loop.

Purpose and Need for Action and Decision to be Made

The purpose of constructing the Copper Mountain Loop is two-fold:

- Implement the BHRMP management decision to provide loop trails on the BCNRT
- Provide training opportunities associated with trail construction to youth work crews as part of America's Great Outdoors Campaign.

The project is needed to conform to decisions made in the BHRMP to enhance the recreational experience and safety for trail users on the BCNRT. Additionally, the project is needed to train the group of youth provided within the required time schedule.

The BLM decision to be made is whether or not to construct the Copper Mountain Loop on the BCNRT.

Land Use Plan Conformance

In addition to conforming to the management decisions noted above, the proposed action conforms to the following RMP decisions.

- RR-56: Incorporate loops, links, and trailheads for both destination and point-to-point travel into the Black Canyon Trail design
- RT-1 & RT-22: Provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of expanding urban populations to promote the preservation of public access, to travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources along the Black Canyon National Recreation Trail. Extend the existing trail northward and provide connections to other trail systems in Yavapai and Maricopa Counties. Segments of the trail are established primarily near urban areas, secondarily within scenic area, and along the historic travel routes of the area.

Additionally, the Desired Future Conditions and Management Actions for the Black Canyon Hiking and Equestrian Trails RMZ and the North Black Canyon Hiking and Equestrian Trails RMZ (RR-55 through RR-64) are applicable to management of the Black Canyon National Recreation Trail.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

The BLM's planning process is governed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (43USC1711) and 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1600, which governs the administrative review process for most of the decisions concerning BLM. Land use plans ensure that BLM-administered public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress as stated in FLPMA and under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. BLM currently manages the Black Canyon Special Recreation Management Area, the Black Canyon Hiking and Equestrian Trails and the North Black Canyon Hiking and Equestrian Trails RMZs under the *Bradshaw-Harquahala Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (2010)*.

Scoping & Public Participation

On August 19, 2010, an open house was held at the Cordes Lakes Community Center from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to solicit public input on a BLM proposal to add non-motorized loop trails to the existing linear portion to the BCNRT, along with other BCTNRT development topics. The public scoping meeting encompassed a broad planning effort, some of which is beyond the scope of the proposed action and alternatives considered in this environmental assessment. The broader planning effort (including motorized trail development, trailhead development, and other recreation facilities) will be conducted in a subsequent planning process.

A total of twenty-three people attended the open house. Attendees were encouraged to sign in, given comment cards, and encouraged to submit comments in writing. BLM management was present to answer questions and travel management maps were available for comment. Maps depicting the location of the proposed Copper Mountain Loop were available.

In addition to external scoping with the public, internal scoping with BLM resource specialists occurred in 2011 and 2012.

Issues

Through the internal and external scoping process, several issues were identified, summarized in Table 1 Issues Summary. Appendix A contains a summary of the internal scoping process, along with issues considered and dismissed from further analysis.

Table 1 Issues Summary

Issue	How issues are addressed
Suggestion that Cooper Mountain be a multi-use trail integrating motorized and non-motorized use.	Not addressed, out of scope of this project. Motorized trail planning will be conducted in a separate effort.
Suggestion for a highly-technical mountain bike loop.	Not addressed, out of scope of this project. Subsequent planning efforts will focus on creating technical mountain biking opportunities within the BCNRT corridor.
Suggestion that trail loops remain non-motorized.	Included in the BLM proposed action. Subsequent planning efforts will address motorized trail development within the BCNRT corridor.
Concern that the Cooper Mountain Loop may be too close to private property, fence lines, and houses for safety reasons.	Private landowner's suggestions have been reflected in the proposed action.
Concern that cultural resources could be impaired during trail construction activities.	See proposed action and impacts analysis section.

II. Alternatives

Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, 7.6 miles of trail would be constructed in the Copper Mountain area by the America's Great American Outdoors hand crews. Construction would begin April 1, 2012 and is expected to take about four weeks to complete. (See Appendix B - Map B for the specific trail alignment.) Trail crews would camp near the trail alignment. Since construction would not utilize heavy equipment, staging areas would not be necessary. Immediately upon conclusion of construction, it is anticipated that trail use would begin.

Under the proposed action, the total area of disturbance is anticipated to be approximately 1.84 acres (7.6 miles of trail x 2 feet tread width ÷ 43560 sq. ft./acre = 1.84 acres). Shrubs such as jojoba, creosote bush, triangle-leaf bursage, and brittle bush may be removed to provide a clear tread for the trail.

Trail design would adhere to BLM trail standards and follow a "rolling contour" design minimizes steep grades, reduces erosion potential, and minimizes future maintenance requirements.

To address the issue of trail proximity to private property, a group of BLM representatives and a BCTC member met with the property owner who expressed the concern. In that meeting, they reviewed trail

placement options and parties hiked the concerning portion of the trail. At that time, the property owner agreed that the proposed loop trail location offered the most privacy because of the topography and vegetation.

Should any previously unrecorded archaeological artifacts be found during construction, the BLM Hassayampa Field Office archaeologist would be immediately notified. All work would cease until an evaluation of the discovery is made by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions needed to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.

No Action

Under the no action alternative, no loop trail would be constructed. No trail crew camping would occur. No additional recreation trail mileage would be created.

III. Affected Environment

The BCNRT is approximately 80 miles long, extending from SR 74 (Carefree Highway) north to SR 69 and to the Prescott National Forest. The proposed Copper Mountain Loop is located in the west portion of the BCNRT, east of Mayer and north of Cordes. The elevation ranges from 3,954 to 4,419 feet. The major geographic feature is Copper Mountain on the north side of the proposed loop. No major highway crossings are within the proposed project area.

This chapter describes the existing environment for the resources/issues identified to have potential impact from the proposed action or alternatives.

Cultural Resources

The land comprising Yavapai County was prehistorically occupied by various Native American tribes for at least 2,000 years. The designation of the trail traces its roots to 1919 when the Department of the Interior officially established the route as a livestock driveway. It was used mainly by valley woolgrowers to herd sheep to and from their summer range in the Bradshaw Mountains and the Black Hills.

The entire 7.6 miles was surveyed, including a 200 foot-wide area of potential effect on either side of the proposed trail. The survey was conducted on November 15 and 16, 2011, with the goal of determining presence of cultural and historic resources. No significant evidence of prehistoric activities within the proposed trail alignment and area of potential effect were found.

IV. Environmental Consequences

This chapter presents the anticipated environmental consequences of the proposed and no action alternatives.

Proposed Action Alternative

Cultural Resources

No significant cultural resources were identified in the proposed trail alignment and area of potential effect. Given that the proposed action requires activity be halted if any cultural resources are found

during the course of construction, it is anticipated that the proposed action would have no direct effect on cultural resources. Indirect effects of trail construction could result from proliferation of off-trail hiking who could inadvertently or intentionally damage cultural resources.

Cumulative actions that could incrementally impact cultural resources in this project area include, trampling/crushing from livestock grazing; off-road vehicle driving and hiking by nearby homeowners and other recreating members of the public; and gas pipeline maintenance activities.

No Action Alternative

Cultural Resources

Under the no action alternative, the Copper Mountain Loop would not be constructed. No direct impact to undiscovered cultural resources would occur within the proposed trail alignment and area of potential effect.

However, indirect and cumulative impacts to cultural resources could occur, due to increased recreation pressures along the urban interface. Without additional managed hiking trails, the no action alternative could lead to “social trail” proliferation, which could result in increased disturbance to unknown archaeological or historical sites within the BCNRT corridor.

V. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations or Agencies Consulted

The following is the list of individuals and organizations consulted:

- Double K Outfitters, Kristine Komar, BCTC Consultant
- Black Canyon Trail Coalition members
- Yavapai County Supervisor, Tom Thurman
- Forest Service and BLM RAC Committees Member, Norman Perry
- Upper Agua Fria Watershed
- Arcosanti
- Yavapai County Development Services

VI. List of Preparers

The following staff and managers contributed to the preparation of this Environmental Assessment:

- Jim Andersen, Lead Realty Specialist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Leah Baker, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, BLM, Phoenix District Office
- Thomas Bickauskas, Travel Management Specialist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Codey Carter, Wildlife Biologist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Steven Cohn, Field Manager, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Hillary Conner, Realty Specialist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Kathleen Depukat, Project Manager, BLM, Phoenix District Office
- Troy Dymock, Trails Specialist, USFS, Recreation Solutions

- Rem Hawes, Manager, BLM, Agua Fria National Monument
- James Holden, Range Management Specialist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Amanda James, Natural Resource Specialist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Elroy Masters, Acting Field Manager, Hassayampa Field Office
- Pamela Mathis, Public Affairs Specialist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Chris McLaughlin, Archaeologist, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Michael Rice, Minerals, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office
- Mary Skordinsky, Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM, Hassayampa Field Office

VII. References

CEQ/USDA/DOI/USEPA, America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations, February 2011, Executive Summary, www.doi.gov/AmericasGreatOutdoors.

CEQ/USDA/DOI/USEPA, America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations, February 2011, Youth Report, www.doi.gov/AmericasGreatOutdoors.

DOI/BLM, Bradshaw-Harquahala Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, April 2010.

Appendix A – Internal Resource Scoping Summary

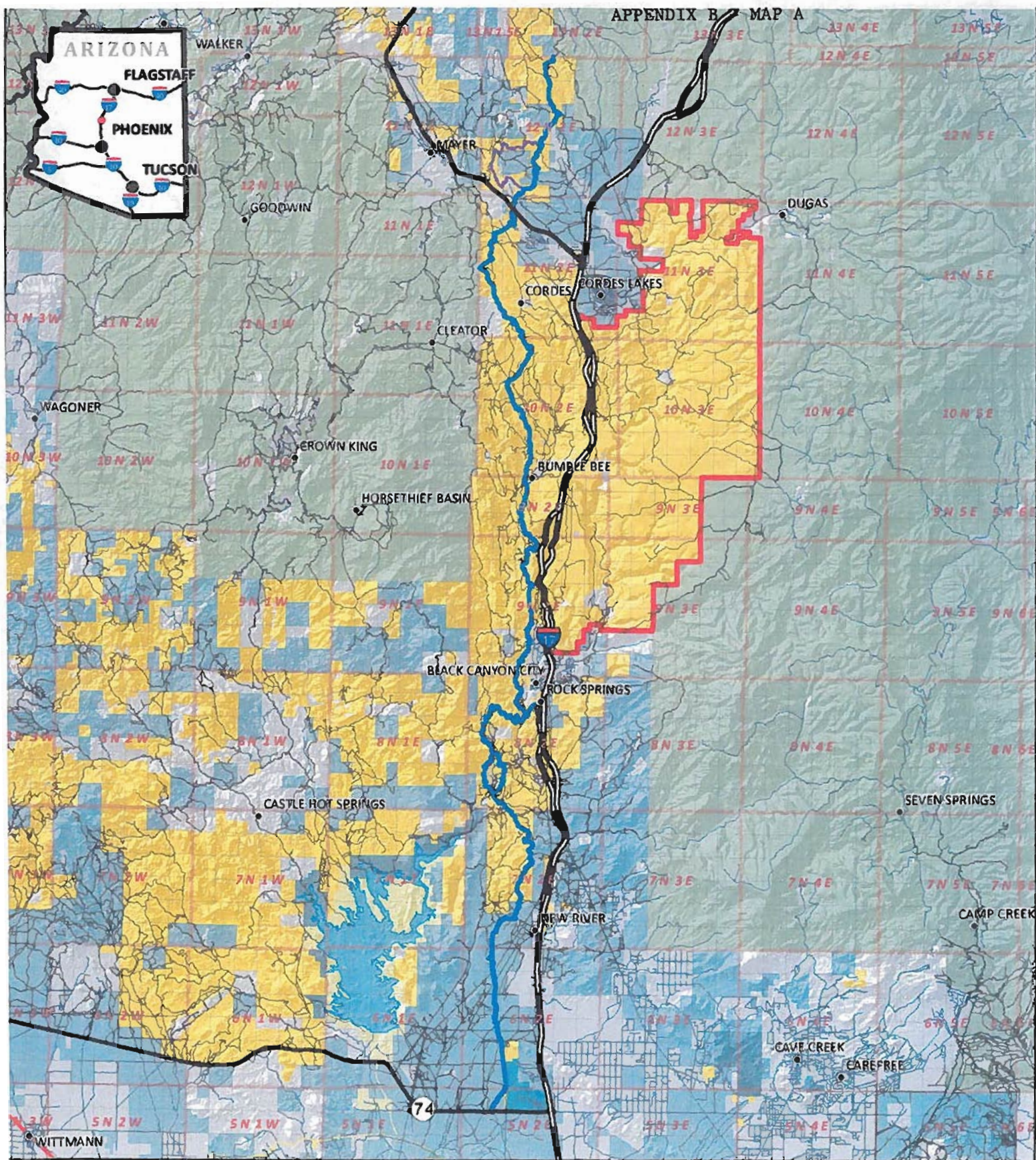
Resource Impact Indicators Worksheet					
Project Name: Black Canyon National Recreation Trail, Copper Mountain Loop Construction Environmental Assessment					
Date: February 27, 2012					
Specialist	Determination*	Resource	1. Potential Impact	2. Impact Indicator	3. Data Needs
	NI – Note: All of Yavapai County is within attainment for PM2.5, PM10 and ozone.	Air Resources	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	ACECs	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	BLM Natural Areas	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bryan Lausten	PI – No significant evidence of pre-historic activities were found during the November 2011 survey	Cultural Resources	Impact to historic, prehistoric or cultural resources	Number of sites	survey
	NP	Environmental Justice	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Prime/Unique Farmlands	n/a	n/a	n/a
Codey Carter	NP/NI – No T&E species including Desert Tortoise are present	Fish and Wildlife (including T&E)	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Floodplains/Hydrological Conditions	n/a	n/a	n/a
James Holden	NP	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jim Andersen	NP	Lands/Access	n/a	n/a	n/a
James Holden	NI – Three allotments within project area. No impact to the allotments should be seen from this loop	Livestock Grazing	n/a	n/a	n/a
Michael Rice	NI -- Two active mining claims located along Big Bug Creek. No anticipated potential impact, not in area of the potential loop	Geology/Mineral Access	n/a	n/a	n/a
Codey	NI	Migratory Birds	n/a	n/a	n/a

Resource Impact Indicators Worksheet					
Project Name: Black Canyon National Recreation Trail, Copper Mountain Loop Construction Environmental Assessment					
Date: February 27, 2012					
Specialist	Determination*	Resource	1. Potential Impact	2. Impact Indicator	3. Data Needs
Carter					
Bryan Lausten	NP	Native American Religious Concerns	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bryan Lausten	NP	Paleontology	n/a	n/a	n/a
James Holden	NI	Rangeland Health	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mary Skordinsky	NI	Recreation	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kathleen Depukat	NI	Socioeconomics	n/a	n/a	n/a
James Holden	NI	Soils	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tom Bickauskas	NI – Creates 7.6 miles of new trail for hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers	Transportation/Travel	n/a	n/a	n/a
Matt Plis	NI -- Seven abandoned mines have been located within ¼ mile of the CML, Number of abandoned mines fenced and signed, The shafts on public land have been fenced and signed for the public's safety.	Hazmat/AML	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Water Resources	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Wetlands/Riparian	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Wilderness/WSA/Wilderness Characteristics	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mary Skordinsky	NI -- Entire Loop is within Class III VRM, proposed action is in conformance with Class III standards	Visual Resources	n/a	n/a	n/a
	NP	Wild Horses and Burros	n/a	n/a	n/a

Resource Impact Indicators Worksheet					
Project Name: Black Canyon National Recreation Trail, Copper Mountain Loop Construction Environmental Assessment					
Date: February 27, 2012					
Specialist	Determination*	Resource	1. Potential Impact	2. Impact Indicator	3. Data Needs
	NP	Wildland Fire Management/Fuels	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mary Skordinsky	NI	Public Safety	n/a	n/a	n/a

Determination* Definitions	Cause & Effect Analysis
NP - not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions	1. Identify potential impact-causing elements and the impacts for each resource
NI - present but not affected to degree that detailed analysis is required	2. Identify resource indicators to measure each impact and help explain cause and effect relationship
PI - present with potential relevant impact that needs to be analyzed in detail in the environmental document	3. Determine methodology to measure relative impacts among alternatives and identify potential data needs

Appendix B – Maps



Black Canyon National Recreation Trail

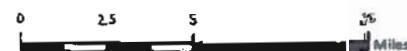
- Black Canyon NRT
- Copper Mountain Loop
- Agua Fria N.M.

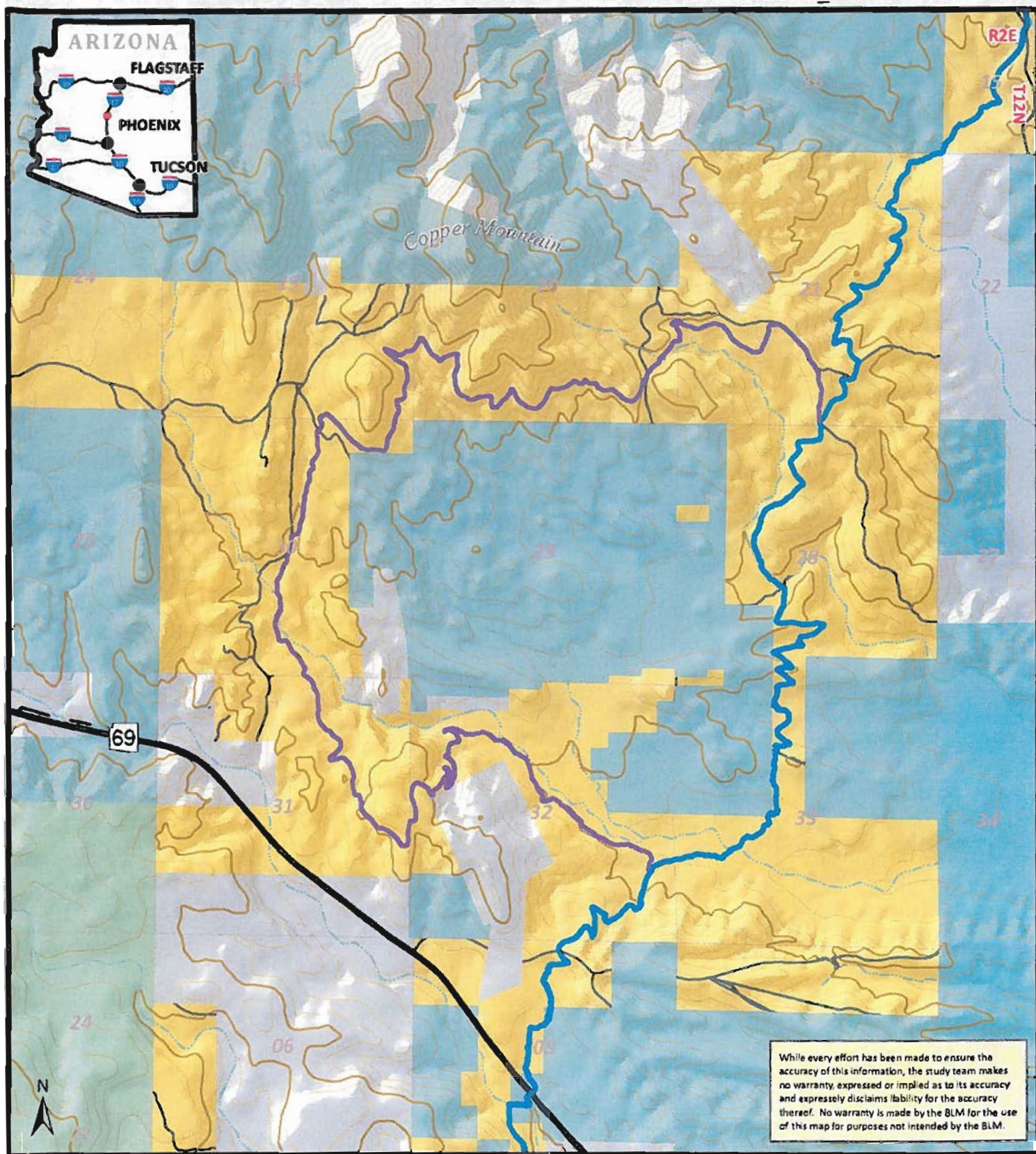
Surface Management

- | | |
|--|---|
| BLM | State |
| BR | USFS |
| County/Local/State Parks | |
| Private | |



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HASSAYAMPA FIELD OFFICE
Jan. 2012





Black Canyon National Recreation Trail - Copper Mountain Loop

- Copper Mountain Loop (7.6 Miles)
- Black Canyon National Recreation Trail
- BLM Routes

- BLM
- State
- Private
- USFS



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Jan. 2012



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles